

STORIES  
POETRY

## The Inglenook

SKETCHES  
TRAVEL

## MISS HANNAH'S SILK DRESS.

"I'd set my heart on it, so it does seem to me I can't give it up. I've wanted it all my life long—I've worked hard and scrimped and saved, and now just as I was so sure I was going to have it to wear Thanksgiving to think I must give it up! It declares it does seem as if I couldn't bear it." And Miss Hannah hid her face in the long roller towel in the kitchen, and in spite of her fifty-five years, sobbed like a child for a few minutes. But it was only a very few minutes before she emerged.

"Hannah Blodgett, I'm down right ashamed of you," she said to herself, half laughing, half crying. "Do you care more for a silk dress than you do for an immortal soul? Do you think it will be any satisfaction to you the Last Day to remember that you wore a black silk dress a few times down here if that boy isn't among the saved? Pense, he will go wrong again, but you will feel that you did what you could if you help him now."

"But"—Miss Hannah choked again, "I don't see why I had to help this way. I know it is dreadful for a woman of my age to feel so about a dress, but I have wanted it so long."

Poor Miss Hannah, things had certainly gone "contrary" with her all her life! She was born with a passionate love for the beautiful, and she was one of the plainest bodies herself on the face of the earth.

Her friends never thought of her plain features, for though she wist it not, her face shone with a holy light because she lived so close to her Master. Her life had been one long struggle with privation and hard work. Long years ago, as a young girl, she had longed for a pretty dress. If she could only have a pretty pale blue silk, she should be perfectly happy—so she thought. Over and over again she had tried to save up money enough to get one by doing work, but it always had to go for something else before she had anywhere near enough.

By and by when she saw the grey hairs coming thick and fast, and the years had left their marks on her face, she sadly gave up the coveted blue, and thought wistfully of a soft grey silk as more appropriate.

But the years came and went. She cared tenderly for her father and mother in their last days. Her sister died leaving her four little ones to Miss Hannah. Bravely and uncomplainingly she had toiled, going hungry herself many a time that the rest might not suffer. The children were all at work now, and Miss Hannah thought the way was clear at last for her to gratify her life-long desire, only it was to be a black silk now. "I shall be very choice of it—it will last me for best as long as I live, and be ready to lay me away in when the time comes," she said. She was going to the city tomorrow to get it, and Cousin Martha was coming next week to help make it.

But last night she had had a letter from Roy Tucker. The Tuckers lived just out of the village, and were a shiftless, good for nothing family, all but Roy. He had always been different from the rest, and Miss Hannah was sure that he would make a good man if only he had a chance. He had been in her Sunday school class, and she had tried to help and encourage him all she could. A few months ago he had gone to the city to work in a store, and she had not heard from him until last night.

"I am in great trouble," he wrote. "Could you lend me \$25 right off? I am ruined if you can't. I am ashamed to ask you, but you have always been my best friend. No one else would trust me, and I do not see how you can now. But if you do, God helping me, I will be worth it of it."

## "ROY."

It was just exactly \$25 that Miss Hannah had in her pocketbook for her dress! "The Lord saw to it that I got the letter before I had spent my money—He must want me to use it for Roy," she thought wearily. "I have wished all my life that I could do some good in the world—perhaps this is my chance, and I ought to be thankful for it. It seems laudable when you read about other people being self-sacrificing; but it is tough work when you are doing it yourself. I've

been praying for Roy for years, if I can help him, I must. The dress would only matter for a few years, but Roy's soul will live forever. I ought not to have hesitated a single minute. I'm ashamed. I wouldn't have thought I could be so vain and selfish; but I'll write to the boy now, and I do believe God will forgive me, and tell me just what to say."

In the meantime Roy was going about his work with an anxious heart. It was the old, old story. He had come to the city, a stranger, with dreams of acquiring a fortune at once, and he had found it was hard, uphill work to even make a living. He was lonely and discouraged, and almost tempted to give up the struggle and go back home. Just then he somehow drifted in with a set of fellows, who taught him to play cards, and assured him he could make money easier and faster than by working. He knew it was wrong, but it was such a temptation! There were so many things he wanted—indeed really needed. What harm was there in his helping himself along in this way until he could earn more? When he got a better position he would stop, of course.

But his conscience troubled him all the time, and he put off writing to Miss Hannah from day to day. One day his employer, just as he was going away to be gone a week, gave him an envelope containing \$25 to pay a bill for him. Roy had never had as much money as that in his possession at one time before in his life. If only it was his, he thought enviously. Perhaps he could double it, or more just in one evening!

Then came the suggestion to—borrow—just for one night. At first he was horrified at the thought; but still he kept thinking of it, and it ended in his keeping—"borrowing it" for just a few hours, he called it.

And luck was against him that evening, he lost it all. It seemed to him that he should go crazy. Why? Oh, why had he yielded to the temptation. He was ruined now for life, no one would ever trust him again. Perhaps he would be sent to jail, what should he do?

Just then he thought of Miss Hannah. She was the only one he dared ask to help him, and he had but little hope that she could or would help him.

When the letter, full of kind and affectionate counsel and the money came he broke down completely. He had thought he should pay it back and say nothing, hoping that his transgression would never be discovered, but instead he went to his employer and confessed it all. "I want to start over again, clean and straight," he said. "Miss Hannah has trusted me, and I'm going to be a good, honest man, for her sake, if I can. May be you won't want me any longer, but I just couldn't look you in the face with that on my mind."

"I think, my boy," said the good man, "that I can trust you as well as your friend. I am sure you will never forget this lesson, and remember God will give you strength to overcome temptation, if you ask Him. Keep close to Him, my boy, and you will be all right."

"I can't thank either of you," Roy wrote to Miss Hannah, "but if ever I can I will help some one as you have me."

"And to think that I hesitated for an instant," said that good woman to herself seeking refuge once more in the long towel, only now her tears were of joy. "All the silk dresses in the world aren't to be mentioned with that letter. Dear me, here I've been wanting that silk dress all my life, and now I'm thankful that I ever was before, because I haven't got it after all!"

An ancient villager, during a serious illness, refused to see a doctor, relying instead upon a certain quack medicine. The minister urged upon the man's wife that his conduct was almost equivalent to suicide. "Yes, sir," replied the wife, "I know it; and many a time I have prayed against it in the church service." "I don't quite follow you," remarked the clergyman; "are you talking about the prayers for the sick?" "Oh, no, sir; I mean when we say in the litany, 'From all false doctoring, good Lord, deliver us.'"

## A WEDDING IN THE DESERT.

(Condensed from "Studies in Oriental Social Life," by H. Clay Turnbull.)

The old governor's son, who lived in Egypt, had come down from his Delta home to take back with him a bride to whom he had been long betrothed, from one of the families living within the fortress walls. This was "the social event of the season" at Castle Nakhli and we who were encamped near the castle for a Sunday's rest, on our way from Sinai to Hebron, had a rare opportunity of witnessing the wedding processions outside of the fortress walls, without any of the hindrances to their observing to which we should have been liable in the narrow city streets.

It was on Saturday that we reached the vicinity of Castle Nakhli. The wedding festivities were already in progress. There was "music and dancing" to be heard from a distance—as at the return of the prodigal son. The dancing as well as the music could be "heard"; for dancing is a vigorous business in the East, especially the dancing of men, who, of course, always dance by themselves. And the music was of that weird and plaintive character which is never heard except in the East, and which once heard can never be forgotten. The sound of the rejoicings came over the desert into our tents by night, when the fortress itself was shrouded in darkness.

The governor of the castle had "made a marriage feast for his son." Besides providing sheep and pigeons in abundance, he had generously sacrificed a young dromedary; that is, he had had a young dromedary slaughtered for its flesh, and the slaying of an animal for food is called sacrificing to God among Orientals, its blood being poured out before God, and its flesh being eaten by those who are in covenant with God.

Animal food is a rarity in the desert, and the sacrificing of a young dromedary is a noteworthy event there. The Arabs of Nakhli were therefore doubly joyous at this wedding feast. "Can ye make the sons of the bride-chamber (the sharers in the wedding festivities) fast, while the bridegroom is with them (supplying dromedary meat without cost)? But the days will come; and when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them (going back to his Delta home), then shall they fast in those days (in their dreary desert abode)." So now they feasted and rejoiced. Everybody at Castle Nakhli, including "the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind," of its adjoining mud village, had a share of boiled dromedary at this wedding feast. Nor were the strangers—"Christian dogs" though they were—who were in the tents outside the castle gates forgotten in the distribution.

It was on Sunday afternoon that the bridal procession set out from the fortress gates. First there came a company of Egyptian soldiers of the governor's guard, with their noisy music of metal-framed drums and ear-piercing clarionets. Then followed a number of women, two by two, all of them shrouded with the sheet-like mantles, and the face-veils that leave only the eyes and forehead exposed, which are the street-dress of Egyptian women of the better class, the married women wearing black and the maidens white.

From time to time, in the intervals of the instrumental music, these women sounded those peculiar "shrill quavering cries of joy, called zugaret," which are to be heard throughout the East on